

Such, then, are the essential features of the syrinx in these three species. A comparison between them shews that in this matter the Woodcock is the least specialized, and, having regard to its restricted vocal powers, this degeneration is not a matter for surprise. The differences which obtain between the syrinx of the Jack Snipe and of the Common Snipe are at first rather surprising, but it must be remembered that they are correlated with a difference in the form of the posterior border of the sternum, which is double-notched, while in all the other Snipes so far examined this margin has but a single pair of notches. But the differences revealed by a comparison of the pterylography, of the convolutions of the intestines, and of the myology are negligible.

From the evidence so far available, we must regard the Jack Snipe as entitled to the generic rank accorded it long since. The close resemblance which obtains between the coloration of the Jack Snipe and the Common Snipe and its congeners we must regard as due to parallelism and not to convergence, for there can be no doubt that all are derived from a common ancestral stock.

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### XVIII.—*Obituary.*

#### EUGENE WILLIAM OATES.

It is with great regret that we have to announce the death, on November 16, 1911, at the age of 68, of our fellow-member Mr. EUGENE WILLIAM OATES, F.Z.S., who joined the Union in 1882. He was born at Girgenti, Sicily, on the 31st of December, 1845, and was educated partly at the Sydney College, Bath, and partly by tutors. In 1867 he passed, by competitive examination, into the Public Works Department of the Government of India, and was posted to Burma, where he soon commenced to investigate the ornithology of the Province, and wrote an article on the Birds of Pegu for the volume of 'Stray Feathers,' published in 1882. In 1881 he returned to England, on two years'

leave, with a large collection of birds, and wrote the 'Birds of British Burmah' in two volumes. In 1886 he was requested by Dr. W. H. Blanford, the Editor of the 'Fauna of British India,' to undertake the portion dealing with Birds. For this purpose he came to England in 1888, again on two years' leave, and wrote the first two volumes, comprising the Passeres. Unable to obtain an extension of leave in order to complete the work, he returned to Burma in 1890. While thus engaged, he also brought out a second edition of 'The Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds' in three volumes. Mr. A. O. Hume having made over to him for that purpose all his notes and correspondence on the subject.

In 1897 Mr. Oates returned to England, and in 1898 and the succeeding year published the 'Game Birds of India' in two volumes. In 1898 the Trustees of the British Museum engaged his services for the purpose of cataloguing the large collection of Birds' Eggs in that Institution. He prepared the manuscript of four volumes, treating of about 50,600 specimens. The first two volumes were printed under his superintendence, but in 1902 he was compelled to abandon the work, owing to severe illness, and the next two volumes were completed, with additions to date, and printed under the supervision of Captain Savile G. Reid. The work has not yet been brought to a conclusion, but the fifth volume is under preparation by Mr. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant, and will shortly be published.

In June 1898 Mr. Oates was elected to the post of Secretary to the British Ornithologists' Union, and held that position till May 1901. During this period he edited a General Subject-Index to 'The Ibis,' 1859-1894, which had been very carefully compiled by the late Mr. G. A. Doubleday.

Mr. Oates retired from the Service in March 1899 and continued to reside in England from that date onwards.

His fine collection of Burmese Birds and their eggs was acquired by the Trustees of the British Museum; it is especially rich in examples of the Pheasants of the genus *Gennæus*, and contains many type-specimens.

XIX.—*Notices of Recent Ornithological Publications.*

[Continued from p. 207.]

30. *Abbott on the Osprey.*

[The Home-Life of the Osprey. Photographed and described by Clinton G. Abbott, B.A., with some Photographs by Howard H. Cleaves. London: Witherby & Co., 1911. 54 pp., 32 pls.]

This is one of the 'Bird-lover's Home-life Series' published by Messrs. Witherby, former volumes having been devoted to the Golden Eagle, the Spoonbill, Storks, and Herons. Full details are given, in excellent style, of the Osprey's habits, while the illustrations are well calculated to exhibit to the best advantage the position of the nest, the callow young, and the poses of the bird at the different stages of breeding. Our readers may like to compare with these Mr. Bahr's paper in 'British Birds' Magazine, vol. i. pp. 17-22, 40-43.

31. *Beebe on the Hoatzin.*

[A Contribution to the Ecology of the Adult Hoatzin. By C. William Beebe. Smithsonian Report for 1910, pp. 527-648. Washington, 1911.]

The Hoatzin (*Opisthocomus cristatus*) is certainly one of the most anomalous forms of living birds, and any further information on it and its eccentric mode of life that can be obtained will be much valued. Mr. Beebe, having himself seen the bird alive and paid great attention to its remarkable structure, is, above all men, qualified to give us his opinion on the subject. This he does in the present memoir, which is full of information on this extraordinary creature. After a short epitome of its history since its discovery by Hernandez some 250 years ago, Mr. Beebe gives us an account of its distribution, structure, nesting, and parasites, and adds his own field-notes on it taken in Venezuela and British Guiana. The Hoatzin is "unquestionably a vegetarian," though small fishes are occasionally found in its stomach. Two or three marshy plants appear to furnish its principal food. The nests are very similar to those of the small Green Heron (*Butorides*

*striata*). The eggs are a creamy white in ground-colour, their entire surface being covered with irregularly shaped dots and spots of reddish brown.

A list of authorities finishes this excellent paper, which is further illustrated by 7 photographic plates of the bird's structure and habits.

### 32. *Duerden on the Plumages of the Ostrich.*

[The Plumages of the Ostrich. By Prof. J. E. Duerden, M.C., Ph.D. Smiths. Rep. for 1910.]

This is a separate copy (with corrections) of an article which appeared in the 'Agricultural Journal of the Union of South Africa' in 1910. Prof. Duerden states that four well-marked plumages can be distinguished in the Ostrich, which he denominates the "natal," the "chick," the "juvenal," and the "adult." He describes these four plumages at full length. We have no doubt that his descriptions are accurate and his figures correct. But we venture to ask him to study the works of Nitzsch, Parker, Garrod, Forbes, and other pterylographists and ascertain how far his views coincide with theirs. This essay is intended for the use of the Ostrich-farmers of South Africa.

### 33. *Fleming on a supposed new Duck.*

[A new Teal from the Andaman Islands. By J. H. Fleming. Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington, xxiv. p. 235 (1911).]

Mr. Fleming describes as "sufficiently different for a new subspecies" *Polionetta albigularis leucopareus*, allied to *Nettion albigulare* of Hume, but larger and more white. He bases the new form on specimens obtained on North Reef Island of the Andaman group, but admits that a specimen from North Andaman Island is intermediate.

### 34. *Gladstone on Dumfriesshire Birds.*

[Addenda and Corrigenda to 'The Birds of Dumfriesshire.' (Extracted from the Proceedings of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway N.H. Soc.) By Hugh S. Gladstone. Dumfries: 1911. 31 pp.]

Much new information is here given, and all possessors

of the original work should endeavour to procure a copy. Future additions will be noted in the same journal.

35. *Goldman on an American Kingfisher.*

[A new Kingfisher. By T. E. Goldman. Smiths. Misc. Coll. 1911.]

The author has got together a large series of Kingfishers of the genus *Ceryle* allied to *C. americana*, and contends that the Central-American form (from Mexico to Panama) and the South-American forms should be referred to different subspecies. Mr. Goldman proposes to call this northern form *Ceryle americana isthmica*. But we do not see that he has established the difference of his proposed new subspecies from *Ceryle septentrionalis* of Sharpe.

36. *Hall on the Feather-Tracts of Sphenura.*

[The Feather-Tracts of *Sphenura broadbenti*. By Robert Hall, C.M.Z.S. Proc. Roy. Soc. Tasmania, 1911, p. 23.]

This is a minute description of the pterylosis of a somewhat anomalous Australian Passerine bird. Mr. Hall, perhaps correctly, calls it a "disappearing genus." But he does not give us any assistance in deciding where it would be best placed in the system.

37. *Henshaw on the Migration of the Pacific Plover.*

[Migration of the Pacific Plover to and from the Hawaiian Islands. By Henry W. Henshaw. Smiths. Rep. 1910, p. 545.]

Mr. Henshaw writes twenty pages about the Golden Plover (*Charadrius dominicus fulvus*), which is stated to be a regular visitor to the Hawaiian Islands on migration. He supposes that they come from Alaska; but the bird has a wide range, and it would be difficult to certify its supposed summer-quarters. Stragglers of some twenty or thirty species of North-American birds cross the Atlantic to the shores of Western Europe every year, and we see no difficulty in a corresponding migration taking place on the western side of North America. As Mr. Henshaw suggests, a regular line of migration might thus be formed and become permanent. But a much more embarrassing



problem is the origin of the anomalous group of Passerine Birds (Drepanidæ) that form the leading feature of the Hawaiian Ornis.

### 38. *Howard on British Warblers.*

[The British Warblers. A History with Problems of their Lives. By H. Elliot Howard. Part 6. London, 1911; R. H. Porter.]

This part of Mr. Howard's work contains the Willow-, Rufous, and Savi's Warblers. The life-history of the first of these is so similar to that of the Chiffchaff that it needs no further comment, except that the author adduces an instance of apparent polygamy which came under his observation. The Rufous Warbler, being a casual visitor, is, as usual, merely described; but a trip to Hungary has enabled Mr. Howard to give us some valuable information on the habits of Savi's Warbler, while he is inclined to attribute to it that struggle for a breeding territory which is the key-note in his account of every species.

The photogravures are consistently charming, but we are unable to comment on the coloured plates, as they have been postponed, owing to an unfortunate accident.

### 39. '*The Irish Naturalist.*'

[The Irish Naturalist. A Monthly Journal of General Irish Natural History. Sept. 1911-Feb. 1912. Dublin: Eason & Sons.]

Though there is much of interest in these numbers of our contemporary, little of it refers to Birds, and perhaps the only item that we need mention is the report by Mr. R. M. Barrington of the introduction of the Marsh-Titmouse and the Nuthatch into Co. Tipperary, given as a warning of their alien origin to those who may meet with either species. The same writer tells us that he has just issued a general index to the work, which may now be obtained through the publishers.

### 40. *Kirkman on British Birds.*

[The British Bird Book. Edited by F. B. Kirkman. Section V. London and Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack. 4to.]

This part of the book contains the *Paridæ*, *Sittidæ*,

*Panuridæ, Laniidæ, Muscicapidæ, Hirundinidæ, Picidæ, Iyngidæ, Cypselidæ, and Caprimulgidæ.* Miss Turner's notes on the Bearded and other Tits, and those of Mr. Pyecraft on the Woodpeckers, are of considerable value, though we cannot quite agree as to the small numbers of the Bearded Tits on the Broads in 1888, when a steady increase had already begun after partial extirpation. Again, the Red-backed Shrike has increased, not decreased, in many places of late years, and we can hardly consider that the Green Woodpecker shews a preference for sandy soils or for old decaying oaks. At least, such is not our experience. But most of the information given is accurate and interesting.

#### 41. *Koenig on the Result of his Visit to the Sudan.*

[Die Ergebnisse meiner Reise nach dem Sudan im Frühjahr 1910. Von Alexander Koenig. Mit 6 Tafeln. Ber. Intern. Ornith.-Kongress Berlin, 1910. (Pp. 469-545).]

This paper was read at the International Ornithological Congress at Berlin in 1910, but has only recently appeared in print. It contains a full narrative of the author's journey to the Sudan, with remarks on the birds obtained and observed on the route, and on the journey from Khartoum up the Nile to Redjaf and back (15th Feb. to April 9th, 1910), and two "appendices." The first appendix contains a systematic list of the birds (250 species) obtained and observed on the journey up the White Nile from Khartoum to Redjaf in 1910, with remarks on their exact localities, geographical distribution, and other particulars. The second appendix contains a similar list of the 126 species which were represented in the collection made by the author on a previous expedition in 1903 between Wadi Halfa and Khartoum. Altogether this is a very important contribution to our knowledge of the Avifauna of the Egyptian Sudan. Six well-drawn and nicely coloured plates illustrate the memoir. They represent *Centropus heuglini*, *Dendromus nubicus*, *Batis minor nyansæ*, *Campephaga xanthornoides*, *Melocichla mentalis amauroura*, and *Amblyospiza melanota*. Prof. Koenig got two fine male examples of the Shoe-bill

(*Balæniceps rex*), which he himself shot with a rifle on the White Nile near Lake No (*op. cit.* p. 476). We are glad to hear that no specimens of this wonderful bird may now be killed without a special permission of the authorities.

#### 42. Mearns on a supposed new Sun-bird.

[Description of a new Species of Sun-bird, *Helionymba raineyi*, from British East Africa. By E. A. Mearns. Smiths. Misc. Coll. vol. lxvi. No. 18. 1911.]

The type of this species was obtained on the Telec River in the Sotik District, B. E. A. It is stated to be closely related to *H. erythrocerca*.

#### 43. Mearns on new Cisticolæ.

[Descriptions of Seven new African Grass-Warblers of the Genus *Cisticola*. By E. A. Mearns. Smiths. Misc. Coll. vol. lxvi. No. 23. 1912.]

This paper is based on the collections made by the East-African Expedition under Col. Roosevelt, and contains descriptions of the following species and subspecies, supposed to be new:—*Cisticola prinioides kilimensis*, *C. subruficapilla æquatorialis*, *C. subruficapilla borea*, *C. allenii*, *C. strangeri kapitensis*, *C. difficilis*, and *C. hypoxantha reichenowi*.

#### 44. Reiser on the Wheatears of the Balkan Peninsula.

[Ueber die schwarz-weißen Steinschmätzer der Balkan-halbinsel. Von Otmar Reiser, Sarjevo. Ber. Intern. Orn.-Kongress Berlin, 1910.]

After giving a short sketch of the three divisions of the Fauna of the Balkan Peninsula and the Wheatears of each of them, this experienced and accurate observer discusses the much-vexed question of the relations of the two Black-and-White species (*Saricola melanoleuca* and *S. albicollis*) to one another, and comes to the conclusion that Mr. Rothschild and Dr. Hartert (see Vög. Pal. Fauna, i. p. 685) were correct in deciding that they are only different forms of the same species.



#### 45. *Reiser on his 'Ornis Balcanica.'*

[Die Endergebnisse meiner Balkanforschungen. Von Otmar Reiser. Ber. Intern. Orn.-Kongress Berlin, 1910, p. 766.]

In this short address Herr Reiser explained to his assembled colleagues at Berlin the difficulties, chiefly of a political nature, that have prevented the completion of his excellent work on the birds of the Balkan Peninsula. The first volume (Bulgaria) was issued in 1894, the second (Montenegro) in 1896, and the third (Greece) in 1905. We are now expecting the fourth and last, and hope that the industrious author will not fail to hasten its completion.

#### 46. *Reiser on Vultures' Habits.*

[Wie finden die Geier das Aas? Von Otmar Reiser. Ber. Intern. Orn.-Kongress Berlin, p. 561.]

Herr Reiser revives the old controversy respecting the way in which Vultures find their food, by *sight* or by *smell*, which we thought had been already settled. Living in a land where Vultures are still plentiful, he has a claim to be heard on the question, which he decides—quite correctly, we believe—in favour of *sight*.

#### 47. '*Scottish Natural History.*'

[The Annals of Scottish Natural History, No. 80 (Oct. 1911), and The Scottish Naturalist, Nos. 1-2 (Jan-Feb. 1912).]

We must first give what may be called an obituary notice of the '*Annals of Scottish Natural History*,' which now reverts to its former name of '*Scottish Naturalist*,' on account of the separation from it of the Botanical portion, in future to be published apart. This excellent periodical was started by our well-known member Mr. Harvie-Brown, when he secured the goodwill of the old '*Scottish Naturalist*,' and has been conducted by him and others for no less than twenty years. We may congratulate him heartily on the success of his venture, and may wish the new journal equal success under the Editorship of our friends Messrs. Eagle Clarke, W. Evans, and Grimshaw, the

first of whom was jointly responsible for the good work done in connexion with the "defunct" periodical. In future, parts will be issued monthly.

The final (October) number of the 'Scottish Annals' contains only one paper on Birds, namely the continuation of the "Report on Scottish Ornithology" by Misses Rintoul and Baxter, giving details of the migration during the year. Crossbills again visited us from abroad, and there are several instances of the capture of the Continental forms of our species in both the north and the south of Scotland.

The first two numbers of the new issue contain some most important notes, but no long article on Ornithology. Mr. Eagle Clarke describes the first British example of the Pine-Bunting (*Emberiza leucoccephala*), the second of the Sprosser (*Luscinia luscinia*), and the third of Baird's Sandpiper (*Tringa bairdi*); the two first-named occurred at Fair Isle, the last at St. Kilda. The first Scotch Woodchat-Shrike is recorded from the Isle of May by Misses Rintoul and Baxter, and the first Serin Finch from Edinburgh by Mr. Wild; while the Duchess of Bedford writes on Richard's Pipit and the Lapland Bunting, shot by her on Fair Isle. Mr. W. Evans and Mr. R. L. Ritchie each report the occurrence of a Whimbrel in winter on the coast of Haddingtonshire.

#### 48. *Tschusi on Two new Corsican Birds.*

[Ueber Palæarktische Formen. Von Victor, Ritter von Tschusi zu Schmidhoffen. Orn. Jahrb. xxxii. p. 143.]

Two more Corsican birds are separated as subspecies in this paper, and named *Turdus merula schiebels* and *Chloris chloris madaraszii*. The differential characters seem to be very slight in both cases.

#### 49. *Van Pelt-Lechner on Dutch Oology.*

[Oologia Neerlandica. Eggs of Birds breeding in the Netherlands. By A. A. Van Pelt-Lechner. Pt. I. The Hague, 1911: unpagged, 34 pls. £1 1s.]

This new work on the eggs of the Birds of the Netherlands

is to be completed in some seven parts, with 191 plates of specimens from the author's collection, which he hopes will represent the variations found in Nature more completely than has been the case in other works of a similar description. A short introduction is prefixed to every family with more than one Dutch species, while each plate is faced by a page giving in tabulated form particulars of the colour, size, shape, texture of shell, number, and weight of the eggs, with a description of the materials and position of the nest (if any), the duration of incubation, and the time of breeding.

In the part before us the writer's intentions have been carried out most successfully, and we may call special notice to the information as to the pigments found in the outermost chalky layer. The specimens on the plates are exceedingly well chosen, and the reproductions of them are beautiful.

The reader should be warned that the details of the nesting-habits refer only to the writer's country, or he may be astonished to find that the Raven breeds only in trees, the Jay chiefly in pines, the Chaffinch in trees, and so forth; while the Nuthatch is said to place a heap of vegetable matter beneath its eggs.

Under the head of the Family the species are often grouped according to the style of their eggs, and comparisons are made with those of birds outside the Netherland area.

The Families treated are *Corvidæ*, *Oriolidæ*, *Laniidæ*, *Sturnidæ*, *Fringillidæ*, *Alaudidæ*, *Motacillidæ*, *Certhiidæ*, *Sittidæ*, *Paridæ*, *Panuridæ*, *Regulidæ*, *Troglodytidæ*, *Accentoridæ*, and *Sylviidæ*.

We congratulate the author on the general excellence of his work, and look forward to the future parts dealing with other groups.